

DANCE

magazine

Merce Cunningham is Going to Have the Best 100th Birthday Ever



Former Merce Cunningham Dance Company members Andrea Weber and Rashaun Mitchell in *Antic Meet*. Photo by Yi-Chun Wu, Courtesy MCDC

Merce Cunningham would have been 99 years old today, and, as a present to the dance world, the Merce Cunningham Trust has announced a dizzying array of celebrations to unfold over the next year in honor of the groundbreaking choreographer's 2019 centennial.

"Merce liked saying he didn't want to celebrate his birthday, and yet he always enjoyed when we threw parties for him," Trevor Carlson, producer of the Merce Cunningham Centennial, said in a press release. Though the Merce Cunningham Dance Company shuttered in 2011 (two years after the choreographer's death, per his wishes), plans to celebrate his legacy range from performances to film screenings to workshops to education programs to dinner parties.



Silas Riener in Cunningham's Antic Meet. Photo by Yi-Chun Wu, Courtesy MCDC

The part we're most excited about? Night of 100 Solos: A Centennial Event, which will take place one year from today, on Cunningham's 100th birthday. New York City's Brooklyn Academy of Music, UCLA's Center for Art and Performance, London's Barbican and Paris' Opéra Comique will each present a 75-minute Event comprising 100 Cunningham solos performed by 100 dancers.

Best of all, the Trust has announced their intention to livestream the entire thing, which is already set to become the largest Cunningham Event ever created. (Cunningham [described](#) his Events as follows: "Presented without intermission, this Event consists of complete dances, excerpts of dances from the repertory, and often new sequences arranged for particular performance and place, with the possibility of several separate activities happening at the same time—to allow not so much [for] an evening of dances as the experience of dance.")



Stephen Petronio Company in Cunningham's Rainforest. Photo by Yi-Chun Wu, Courtesy Stephen Petronio Company

In the lead up to the Centennial, dozens of organizations worldwide will perform Cunningham repertory (with licensing fees waived by the Trust) beginning this fall. Stateside, that includes companies like [Ballet West](#), [The Washington Ballet](#), [Stephen Petronio Company](#) and Spectrum Dance Theater, and presenters from Jacob's Pillow to New York City Center to the [National Center for Choreography at The University of Akron](#). Abroad, the participants range from Cunningham aficionados, like [Compagnie CNDC-Angers/Robert Swinston](#), to companies tackling his work for the first time, like The Royal Ballet.

Who knew turning 100 could be so much fun?